



The President's Daily Brief

May 18, 1976

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~~*Top Secret*~~ 25X1

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LEBANON: *The severity of the fighting in Beirut over the weekend prompted new threats yesterday from President Franjiyah that he will not resign until security improves.*

It is not clear whether the President's threat was issued solely on his own initiative or was part of an alleged secret agreement between Christian and Syrian leaders that Franjiyah delay his resignation until Syria eliminates the 25X1 radical Muslim security threat.



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The Christians themselves appear to have initiated a new offensive against the leftists in Beirut. Both Christian and Muslim militia-men using heavy artillery shelled residential areas indiscriminately, causing high death tolls. Although the bombardment subsided somewhat yesterday, fighting continues in most areas of the capital.

Tripoli remained relatively quiet yesterday in the wake of heavy clashes there last week between Syrian forces and Iraqi-sponsored leftist groups. There is still considerable tension, but some Palestine Liberation Army commanders responded over the weekend to a withdrawal order from Yasir Arafat.

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EGYPT:



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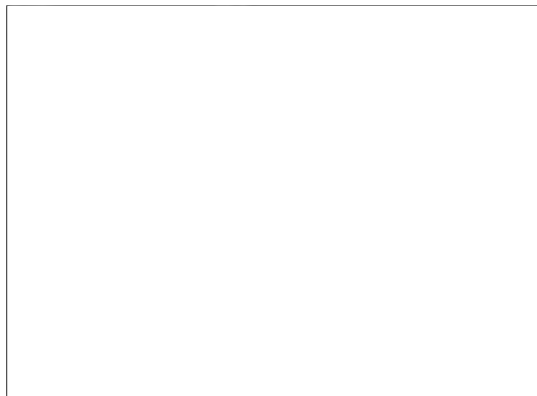
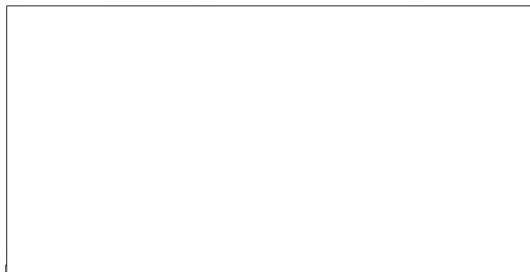
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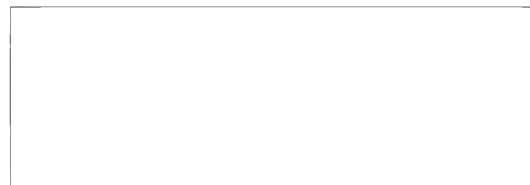
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JORDAN-LIBYA:



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USSR: Brezhnev's more frequent public appearances and the burst of acclaim for him follow two months of subtle signs of change in Soviet leadership behavior.

The leadership used the party congress to mark time and emphasize continuity and stability. Since then, there has been some indication that Brezhnev's reduced stamina has been recognized and that duties among the leadership have been redistributed. Other senior leaders have usually been called on to fill in for Brezhnev.

According to the US embassy, there are rumors in Moscow of political changes when the Central Committee meets again, perhaps in June. The rumors include shifts in top leadership offices or the elevation of Brezhnev to a less active but still authoritative status.


The balance of forces represented in the leadership for over a decade does not appear to have been upset, however, and there is no convincing evidence that any faction of the leadership will be able to dictate succession moves in the near future. Indeed, most senior leaders probably see their interests best served by the status quo and are reluctant to push for changes.

Any changes in relationships within the leadership in the near future probably will involve elevating Brezhnev to a more honorary status while altering the leadership balance as

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little as possible. The evidence does not yet demonstrate, however, that the leadership is ready to take such a step.

EGYPT-ISRAEL: 

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Although Cairo in late April moved the armored personnel carriers from two mechanized infantry battalions to the west bank of the canal, combat and service support units co-located with these two battalions were still seen on the east bank--suggesting that some elements of the two battalions also remain there.

In a conversation with Ambassador Eilts last week, Egyptian Minister of War Gamasy said that he had not been able to reduce the number of battalions to the permitted eight because of "technical and administrative reasons." Gamasy noted that there already had been a reduction in the number of battalion headquarters, and indicated that the remaining redeployments would take place by May 20.

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NOTE

Sudan is worried that Ethiopia's planned offensive against Eritrean rebels might involve Sudanese forces in the fighting.

The Sudanese are afraid that the Ethiopians will send air and ground forces into Sudanese territory in hot pursuit of fleeing Eritreans. The Khartoum government has warned that it will take defensive measures and apparently has asked Iraq and Syria for SA-7 handheld missiles and other air defense weapons.

We believe Ethiopia will try to avoid violating Sudanese territory during the forthcoming offensive, but there could well still be border incidents.

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